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The Palestinian Rural Notables' Class in Ascendency: The Hannun Family of Tulkarm (Palestine)[1]

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Abstract

This paper discusses the Palestinian rural notables' class, comprised of rural sheikhs, village or clan headmen with similar life trajectories in late Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine. The paper uses the Palestinian Hannun family of Tulkarm to demonstrate how these notables exploited changing legal, administrative and political conditions, and global economic realities, to attain socio-economic and political ascendency in the Palestinian countryside and its emergent towns. The article analyses their actions in structuralist terms of clans, households, marriage alliances and networks of patronage, and historically contextualises their rational decision-making process about selling land to Jews and cooperation with the British authorities.

Keywords: Palestine, Tulkarm, Rural Notables, Rural Elites, Marriage Alliances, Segmentary Theory, Ottoman Palestine, British Mandate of Palestine, Great Palestinian Revolt (1936–1939)

1 The article is dedicated to the Memory of Isma'il Husayn Abu Shihada (1926–2021), a witness to his times (*shahid 'ala 'aṣrihi*).

2 The author wishes to thank the interviewees of the Palestine Rural History Project (PRHP), members of the Hannun family, for sharing their life stories with him. The work incorporates several insights from a PhD dissertation chapter written under the supervision of Dr Ido Shahar and Professor Mahmoud Yazbak of the University of Haifa, Israel (2022). The author wishes to thank the named copyright holders for permission to publish the accompanying images.

For centuries, Palestine had a mostly rural society, with the vast majority of the population spread across hundreds of villages of various types and sizes in the Palestinian countryside (Arabic: *reef*). Much work has been carried out on Palestinian urban history. However, beyond specific works dedicated to various villages and the Palestinian peasantry (Arabic *fellahin*) during the Great Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936–39 and the Nakba of 1948,[3] historians didn't do enough, it seems, to explore the history of the Palestinian countryside or to tie its social, political and economic dimensions to broader national, or regional, colonial or post-Ottoman frameworks.[4]

This disparity is especially noticeable in the case of Palestinian rural notables during the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. Since the publication of Albert Hourani's seminal paper, 'Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables' (1966), social historians have highlighted the role of urban notables (Arabic: *a'yan, wujaha'*) as intermediaries between the government and the populace, and as a driving force behind the local society, economy and politics (Hourani 1993; Gelvin 2006). In the Palestinian context, too, most research focused on the urban elites, while the upper echelons of rural society received little attention.[5] This state of affairs is striking given that rural notables comprised the majority among Palestinian elites (Arabic: *al-khawwas*). Thus, understanding the roles they played, and historicising then, are both essential for explaining socio-economic change and Palestinian native agency *vis a vis* wider Ottoman, British and Zionist agendas in the shaping of modern Palestine. The Hannun family of Tulkarm, discussed in this article, provides one well-documented example of a Palestinian rural notable family's rise to socio-economic ascendency, and its biography is illustrative of the historic trajectory of a wider class of rural notables active in Palestine's countryside and emerging towns during the period under discussion.

In Palestine's agrarian society, large landowners belonged *a priori* to the elites. The lower echelons of this landed gentry: rural sheikhs, religious scholars with material interests, village or clan headmen, formed a broad class of rural notable families with similar life trajectories. Palestinian historian Hanna Batatu termed this group, in the Syrian context, 'the Lesser Rural Notables' (Batatu 1999). Rural notables and their households formed a heterogeneous, yet distinct social stratum, or class, distinguishable from other types of notables by their rustic origin, their medium land holdings and their basis in villages and towns, with

3 Khalidi (1992); Swedenbourg (2003); Davis (2011); Masalha (2012); Davis and Kirk (2013).

4 In contrast to the Ottoman period: Büssow (2011), Ben-Bassat (2013), exemplifying the 'Imperial Turn' in Middle Eastern historiography cf. Mikhail and Philliou (2012).

5 Muslih (1987); Khalaf (1991); Brynen (1995); Chorev-Haleva (2019).

the associated networks of patronage spread primarily in the countryside. Some of them moved to towns, or converted their social positionality to an urban one. During the British mandate period, this class included also former village-cluster sheikhs (Arabic: *masha'ikh nahiya*) and upstart village elders, and mukhtars, playing significant roles in Palestinian politics and interactions with the Zionist Yishuv and British colonial authorities (including the 'regional leaders' discussed by Hillel Cohen [2008]: 2–3).

The article argues, and provides evidence for, the crucial role rural notables played in the socio-economic development of modern Palestine. Drawing on the case of the Hannun family, with supportive evidence for associated lineages, it explains how these families exploited the changing legal, administrative and political settings in order to translate their extensive land holdings into social, economic, and political capital. Many rural notable families made their fortune by moving to new district towns and growing cities. As in the case of originally urban notables, rural notables' ability to adapt their existing power-structures, like segmentary lineage systems, marriage alliances and networks of patronage, into new circumstances proved instrumental to their success. This ability is evident in their successful incorporation into the Ottoman municipal and provincial councils (*majalis*), their pioneering of the planting of citrus groves (Arabic: *bayyarat*) north of Jaffa, and their strong participation in national politics in Mandatory Palestine under colonial rule.

The article also holds, *inter alia*, that Palestinian inter-community dynamics should be read with reference to the wider interactions with the global economic markets, the Ottoman and British administrative superstructure, and European colonisation (in the Palestinian case, Zionist settlement). Land sales to Jews, for example, are better explained from the rational decision-making perspective of the families involved. Such explanations provide a more compelling account of this phenomenon than nationalistic perspectives disavowing confessional coexistence in Palestine, or a retroactive causative association between land sales and the depopulation of Palestine during the Nakba.[6]

For its mine of evidence, the article uses often-overlooked primary materials in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, including, but not limited to, land registry (Arabic: *tabu*) records, court records, petitions, legal agreements, administrative correspondence, business ledgers, personal letters, autobiographies, photos, and books about Zionist settlements and Palestinian villages. The article also uses oral testimonials, which, while admittedly subjective and prejudiced, verify and provide substantial insights into earlier archive evidence. The study integrates these many disparate sources about the history of the Hannun family into a unified

6 Cf Avneri (1984); Stein (1984a); Abu Bakr (1996); Lockman (1996).

narrative woven into the changing economic, cultural, and social fabric of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Palestine. Accordingly, what follows is a theoretically informed, topic-oriented discussion of various subjects in the history of the family, demonstrating the ascendency of Palestinian rural notables during the late Ottoman and British Mandate period, roughly c. 1850–1948. While geographically focused on the Tulkarm region, similar trends existed in other areas of Palestine and the Levant.

An Historical Overview

During the Ottoman period, the Wadi al-Sha'ir *nahiya* (village cluster), the Hannun's ancestral land between modern Nablus and Netanya, belonged to the peripheral hinterland of Nablus (al-Burqawi 1994). Socio-economic and political changes in Wadi al-Sha'ir largely followed those of the provincial centre, led by a closely knit web of economic, social and political relations between Nablus' urban notables and the city's surroundings (Al-Salim, 2008: 1–4). With the help of rural trading partners, these urban notables established trading monopolies that transformed Jabal Nablus' economy from a primarily autarkic subsistence-based one into an export-driven market, shipping vast quantities of cash crops and finished goods like olive oil, olive soap, cotton, and fabrics to off-shore markets (Doumani 1995). Increasing demand for these commodities in the Ottoman Empire's urban centres and in Europe spurred demographic growth and settlement expansion in the lowlands surrounding Jabal Nablus.[7]

In the nineteenth century, the age of Ottoman Reforms, or *tanzimat*, revolutionised provincial society, politics and trade. The inauguration of Ottoman cadastral surveys and land registration with the passing of the Land Laws of 1858–1859 facilitated the accretion of vast estates by notable families. New communications technologies and improved transportation infrastructure facilitated the long-distance exportation of time-sensitive produce like watermelons and citrus fruit (Yazbak 2018). The Velayet Laws of 1858 and 1864 improved the Ottoman Empire's bureaucratic organistion by standardising administrative hierarchies and founding of municipal institutions of new municipal and provincial councils.[8] First, Wadi al-Sha'ir was incorporated into the Bani Ṣa'b *nahiya*. Then, in the 1870s and 1880s, Bani Ṣa'b was elevated into the level of a *qada'* (subdistrict) with its *qa'imaqam* and municipal council administrated from Tulkarm (Fig. 2).[9] Rural notables used their participation in the *qada'*"s institutions to amplify their influence inside the expanding Ottoman state

7 Grossman (1990); Grossman (1994: 144–153); Marom (2019: 211–212); (2022a: 77–189).

8 Findley (1986: 5–7); Abu Bakr (1996: 194–202); Büssow (2011: 59–71).

9 Al-Salim (2008: 112–130); Abdel Raheem (2011: 75–80).

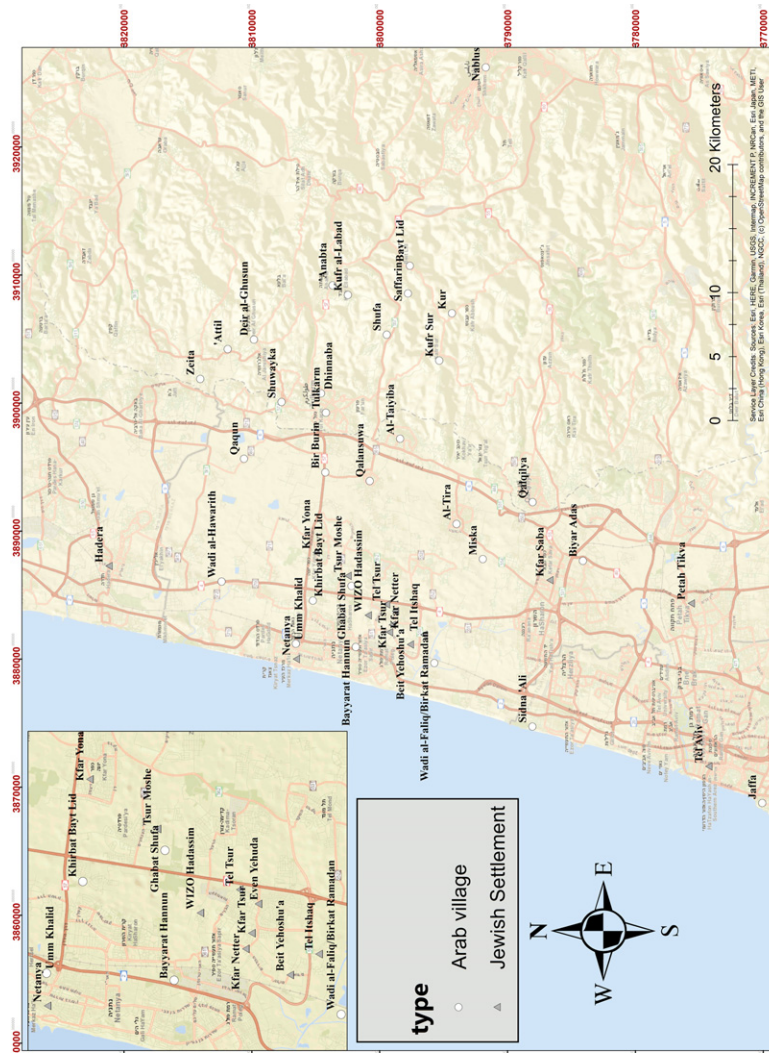


Figure 1. General location map (© R. Marom).

Figure 2. Tulkarm, a subdistrict town and administrative centre, 1930s (© A. Sasson and reproduced with permission).

apparatus, and, according to Rex Brynen 'to augment their existing social power with new legal instruments and hence new economic opportunities' (Brynen 1995: 26).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Palestine experienced increased waves of transnational migration and settlement, including both intra-Ottoman population movements of Egyptians, Algerians, Circassians, Bosnians, and international European colonisation endeavours, like German Templars and Jewish-Zionist Eastern Europeans enjoying foreign consular protections.[10] The fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of First World War (1918) and the establishment of the British Mandate of Palestine (1920) ushered in a period of aggravated national struggle in Palestine between the Zionist and Arab-Palestinian national movements.[11] Concomitantly, improved health measures and external immigration resulted in unprecedented population expansion and economic growth, especially along the coast. Jewish land acquisitions and settlement brought Palestinian society into growing friction with the Zionist project and its British sponsors. Palestinian notables, like the Hannun family, adopted different positions with respect to Jewish-Arab cooperation and the Palestine Question, leading to divergences of opinion and action with disastrous ramifications for inter-Palestinian politics during the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt in Palestine and into the War of 1948.[12]

10 Shiller and Barkay (2014); Grossman (2014: 46–78).
11 Khalidi (2020); Pappé (2022: 72–121).
12 Cohen (2008: 95–170); Marom (2022a: 348–374).

Clans, Households, Marriage Alliances and Networks of Patronage

This section opens with a brief exposition of the Segmentary structure of Palestinian rural society, as demonstrated by the Hannun family (for a general introduction to Segmentary models of Palestinian society (see Atran 1986). While acknowledging the importance of supplementary factors of friendship, status, and 'closeness' (Arabic: *qaraba*) in the construction of social relations in the MENA region, the author's impression is that the Segmentary model is the analytical prism that best fits the evidence in hand, and more importantly, is also the main emic prism used by informants to describe, explain and make sense of the different social roles and categories discussed in this article.

Early scholarship about Palestinian history did little to historicise social interactions within theoretical frameworks. In the 1940s-1950s, sociologists and anthropologists working in the MENA region and Sub-Saharan Africa elaborated a structuralist model of modern Arab societies, according to which these societies are divided into social units, or 'segments', arranged hierarchically according to lineages (Smith 1956). These scholars found support for their model in classical Arabic and Islamic texts, as well as in living accounts of ethnographic informants, highlighting the importance of patrilineal descent (Arabic: *nasab*). Scholars applied the segmentary model to Palestinian society, stressing the role of clan structure of *hama'il*, sing. *hamula*, as basic socio-economic solidarity and political action groups (1975). These scholars took note of Lévi-Strauss work, which showed how patrilineal lineages expended the influence of lineages through marriage/marital alliances (cf. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 7–15). Later, historians applied these models to Ottoman elites by formulating the notion of the notable's 'household' (Arabic: *bayt*, Ottoman Turkish: *kapı*), incorporating different classes of dependents (ibid, 1–46; Hathaway 1997:17–31). Some advocates of neo-patrimonial analysis stressed the importance of patronage and households for creating and perpetuating social stratification (cf. Erdmann and Engel 2007). More recently, Harel Chorev-Halewa utilised graph theory to chart and quantitatively study 'social networks' in the Palestinian context (Chorev-Halewa 2019). Needless to say, these diverse frameworks for explaining social interactions should not be read as deterministic, but rather as blueprints and strategies of action that actors may or may not follow.

The Hannun family offers a typical example of a rural notable family whose powerbase was primarily rural.[13] Following the Ottoman land reforms, rural notable families allotted newly-obtained lands to Bedouin

13 Compare to the Abu Hantash family of Qaqun: al-Mudawwar (1994: 37–39).

Figure 3. The Samara-Hannun fortified mansion, Saffarin, 2022 (© R. Marom and reproduced with permission).

and *fellahin* sharecroppers (al-Salim 2011: 66). Rural notables cultivated patron-client relationships with their leaseholders, and their political and economic power was reliant on the maintenance of these relations (Graham-Brown 1982). During this period, rural notable families also diversified their economic activities to money lending and cash-crop export, overlapping the socio-economic niche previously occupied by Muslim urban *tujjar*.[14]

Rural notables, like the more commonly discussed urban ones, depended primarily on the social relations facilitated by kinship, which formed the backbone of their extended households. According to local traditions, the Hannun family descended from a group of Transjordanian Huwaytat Arabs, which settled in the village of Saffarin southeast of Tulkarm before the nineteenth century. The Hannuns formed a branch (*batn*) of the Dar Hasan *hamula*, alongside the Salih, Abu Dhiyab, ʻAli Abu Bakr, and Samara (Saffarin) families (Fig. 3).[15] In the middle of the nineteenth century, the sibling patriarchs of the Hannun and Samara families moved to Tulkarm together with other families of Saffarin.[16] The

14 Doumani (1995); Gilbar (2003; 2005); Chorev-Halewa (2019).

15 Mashʻal (1971: 24); al-Mudawwar (1997: 11); ʻAmayra (2011).

16 Tulkarm Shariʻa court register [henceforth: TK *sijill*] 1 [1914], *nūmrō* [no.]. 63; al-Mudawwar (1997: 6); Shabkat al-Basra (2013).

suppression of the Qays-Yaman conflicts, and the removal from power of the traditional village-cluster *sheikhly* families, which cultivated these conflicts, opened the door to the rise of alternative leading lineages under opportunistic rural strongmen.[17]

Al-Hajj Muslih Yusif Salih 'Hannun',the family's founder, worked as a tax farmer (Arabic: *multazim*), on behalf of the Ottoman authorities. As *multazim*, Muslih Hannun enjoyed economic and political advantage over rival families. Muslih Hannun had six sons, Muhammad, 'Abd al-Hafidh, Mahmud, 'Abd al-Fattah, 'Abd al-Rahim and Yusif, residing in Tulkarm or neighbouring Dhinnaba (Table 1).[18] The first generation of the family worked as one to broaden and fortify the family's influence in the new Ottoman administrative institutions established in the 1860s. Muhammad Hannun, the eldest son, represented the family in the Bani Sa'b Administrative Council between 1882–1918 (al-Salim 2008: 126; Ghanaim et al 2009). Yusif Hannun, his brother, attended the Ottoman university of Darülfünun in Istanbul, and went on to become a successful watermelon merchant and exporter (al-Salim 2008: 158, 166–168). The second generation of the family inherited their parents' socio-economic and political status, and expanded the family's influence into new fields, as detailed below.

This political trajectory from village to town is not unique to the Hannuns. For example, the role of *multazim* also empowered the rural notable al-Hajj Ibrahim Isma'il Idris (fl. 1869–1914),[19] a member of the Haurani 'Abd al-Qadir *hamula* from the neighbouring prosperous village of al-Taiyba, who also moved to Tulkarm. His three sons, two *qadi*s and Tulkarm's future mayor, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hajj Ibrahim (1869–1949; in office 1905–1938), were the Hannun's leading political opponents in the Bani Sa'b/Tulkarm Subdistrict between 1890–1940.[20] Like the Hannuns, the Hajj Ibrahims benefitted from an extensive web of kinship ties with prominent relatives who remained in al-Taiyibe, like the Qasim, the 'Abd al-Raziq and the Idris clans.

Rural notable families expended their influence through marriage alliances (Arabic: *musahara*, confusingly also called *nasab*), which cemented the ties between the trading partners; bolstering the businesses of the Hannuns. The patriarch, Al-Hajj Muslih, married the sister of 'Abdullah Samara of Dhinnaba, large landlord and owner of Minat Abu Zabura, the principal 'Port des Naplousins' since before Napoleon's campaign (1799;

17 Cf. Hoexter (1973); al-'Amiri (2003: 16–36); Abbasi (2019).

18 TK *sijill* 1 [1914], no. 72; Mash'al (1971: 24); Haykal (1988: 64); al-Burqawi (1994: 41).

19 TK *sijill* 1 [1914], *nūmrō* [no.]. 8.

20 Mash'al (1971: 5, 19–21); al-Salim (2008: 162); Ghanaim, Abd al-Rahman and al-Ashqar (2009).

Table 1. The Hannun family tree in the 1910s according to Yusif Haykal's autobiography (Haykal 1988).

The Patriarch — Muslih Yusif Salih 'Hannun' from Saffarin (Abu Muhammad)						
Yusif (Abu Rushdi)	'Abd al-Rahim (Abu Rashid) (d. 1937)	'Abd al-Fattah (Abu Muslih) (d. 1934)	MahmŒṬd (AbuSalīm)	'Abd al-Hafiz (Abu al-Hasan) (d. 1935)	Muhammad (Abu Ra'uf) (d. 1920–1926?)	The first generation
Rushdi (1910–?) Rasha' (1912–?) Dr.Hilmi (1913–98) Dr. 'Awni (1914–?) Nida' 'Ifaf	Rashīd Rashshad Na'im	Muslih Fallah Sallah	Salim 'Abdallah	Hasan (d. 1937) Dr. Kamal 'Abd al-Hamid (b. 1915)	Ra'uf At-Tahir Husayn	The second generation

Jacotin 1826). Al-Hajj Muslih Hannun married off his only daughter to one of 'Abdallah Samara's sons.[21] A member of the Samara family (Dhinnaba, b. 1944) explained the intimate interlace of marriages creating one large socio-economic block by saying:

> In bygone days in Palestine, the rich and wealthy families used to marry with their own family members in order to preserve ownership of its possessions inside the family. That way, the woman doesn't remove property from her family. Mas'uda Hannun married Muhammad 'Ali Abdallah Samara, and al-Hajja Maryam, 'Abdallah Samara's daughter, married one of Muslih's sons. Another Hannun married her brother's son. Thus, everybody kept their lands[22]

Other marriage alliances also allowed the Hannuns, and similar upstart rural families, entrance into the established circles of the urban elites. 'Abd al-Rahim and Yusif Hannun, Muslih's sons, worked as trade representatives (Arabic: *wusata'*) for Jaffa merchants like Yusif and Sa'id Beidas, Mustafa Haykal, Hasan al-Mustaqim, and for Habib Bistras of Beirut (al-Salim 2008: 162–166). These economic partnerships and political associations were cemented by marriage alliances, which forged interdependencies and a sense of 'closeness' that endured among future generations of the families. Thus, Mustafa Haykal's daughter — sister of the future mayor of Jaffa Yusif Haykal (1907–1989, in office 1945–1948) and mother of future mayor of Tulkarm, Hilmi Hannun (1913–1998, in office 1962–1998) — married Yusif Hannun in late 1909 (Haykal 1988: 8). According to Yusif Haykal's memoirs, the families used to visit each other often, and co-habit the other family's residences. During the First World War, the Hannuns' sheltered the Haykals on their estates in and around Tulkarm.[23] 'Ali al-Mustaqim and Yusif Haykal were also matrilineally related, and both close friends of the Hannuns (Haykal 1988: 100).

Marriage alliances and economic partnerships were primarily made with families with similar or superior status. In this hierarchy of patronage, the Hannuns fostered close ties with the clans inhabiting villages in which they possessed large estates, namely Saffarin, Shufa, Dhinnaba, Tulkarm, Kufr al-Labad and Kufr Sur (Mash'al 1971: 24; see Fig. 4). Clients, called *atba'* in Arabic (lit: 'followers,' 'those who are led'), received protection and land for cultivation in their extensive estates on the coastal plain, primarily Bayyarat Hannun (see Fig. 5). In times of unrest, clients sometimes functioned as 'soldiers' for rural notable families, just like the *fellahin* in the service of the traditional *masha'ikh al-nahiya* during the Late Ottoman Qays-Yaman conflicts (Hoexter 1973).

21 Ibrahaim 'Abdallah Samara's inheritance deed, CZA, file A417/258.

22 PRHP Interview conducted on December 16, 2020; corroborated in an interview with Hannun family members on 15 July 2021.

23 Haykal (1988: 47, 57, 63); Marom (2022a: 333–338).

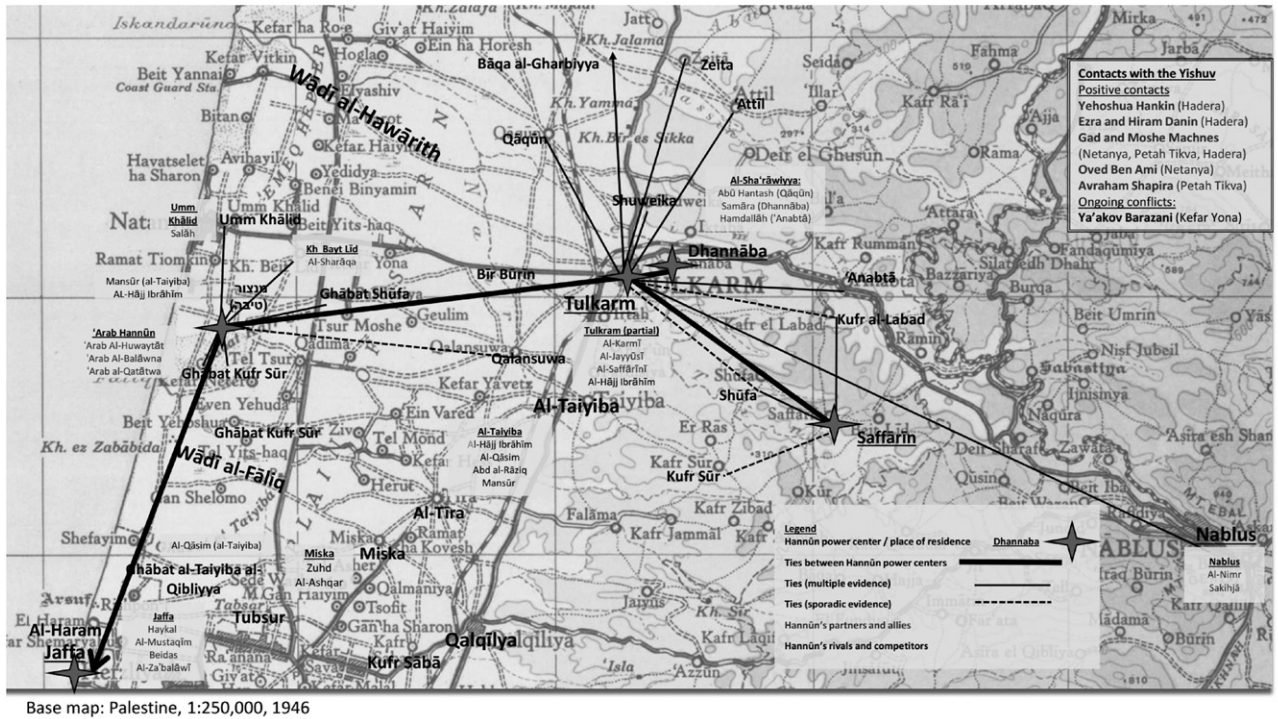


Figure 4. The social networks of the Hannun family, 1940s (© R. Marom and reproduced with permission).

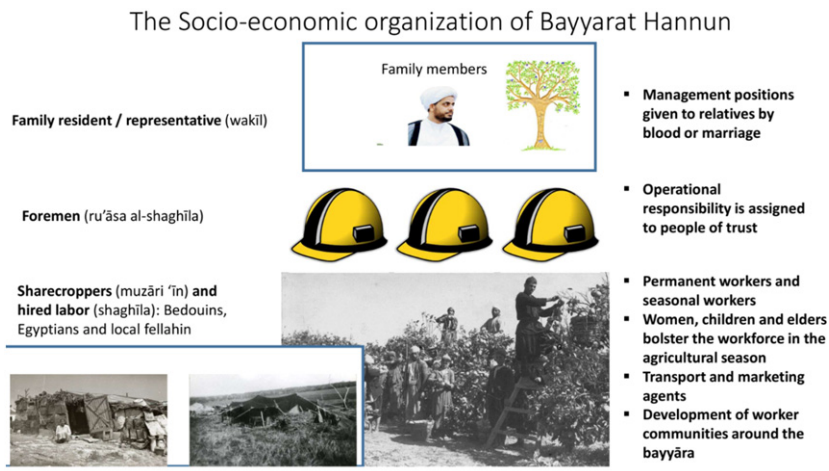

The Socio-economic organization of Bayyarat Hannun
Family members
Family resident / representative (wakīl)
Management positions given to relatives by blood or marriage
Foremen (ru'āsa al-shaghīla)
Operational responsibility is assigned to people of trust
Sharecroppers (muzāri 'īn) and hired labor (shaghīla): Bedouins, Egyptians and local fellahin
Permanent workers and seasonal workers
Women, children and elders bolster the workforce in the agricultural season
Transport and marketing agents
Development of worker communities around the bayyāra

Figure 5. The socio-economic organisation of Bayyarat Hannun; typical of Palestinian citrus groves (bayyarat) (© R. Marom and reproduced with permission).

Some clients were displaced and uprooted people, lacking social protection in a decentralised society built along clan lines (cf. Hathaway 1997: 21–24). Among them one could find persons without a social support framework like the *tanib*, a seeker of shelter from blood vengeance, and the *laqit*, a deserted child. In the unsettled conditions of the Palestinian countryside, whole families displaced by economic crises or blood feuds often sought protection and sustenance through patron-client relationship with stronger families. Although these relations were on their face value voluntary, and clients were indeed capable of independent action or change of patrons, or acted as lesser patrons themselves, many client-patron relations lasted for generations and are still remembered today.[24]

In addition to local *fellahin*, the Hannuns employed about 200 itinerant workers from Egypt, and lower-class tribesmen like 'Arab al-Balawna, 'Arab al-Huwaytat and 'Arab al-Qatatwa (Fig. 6).[25] This extensive employment of patron-client relations represents a wider social phenomenon.[26]

24 PRHP Interviews held in al-Tayiba, al-Tira and Zeimer in Israel, 2014–2017.

25 'Concerning Activists from the Environs of Hadera — Tulkarm, Materia from 1938–1939', u.d.,Hagana Archives, file 105/288; 'Tulkarm: Town Overview', CZA, file A222/402; Rashid Hannun's payroll, 1946, Hannun family papers; Granott (1952: 40).

26 The PRHP recorded similar relations among the Qasim 'Abd al-Qadirs, 'Abd al-Raziqs, Nashif and Mansurs of al-Taiyiba; the Samaras, Burqawis and Sayfs of Dhinnaba; the Mansurs and 'Abd al-Hayys of al-Tira; as well as among the following families: Shubayta (Miska), Abu Hantash (Qaqun), Hamdallah ('Anabta), Beidas (al-Sheikh Muwannis), al-Sab' (Qalqiliya), al-Jayyusi (Qalansuwa and Jaljuliya) and Abu Hijla (Deir Istiya).

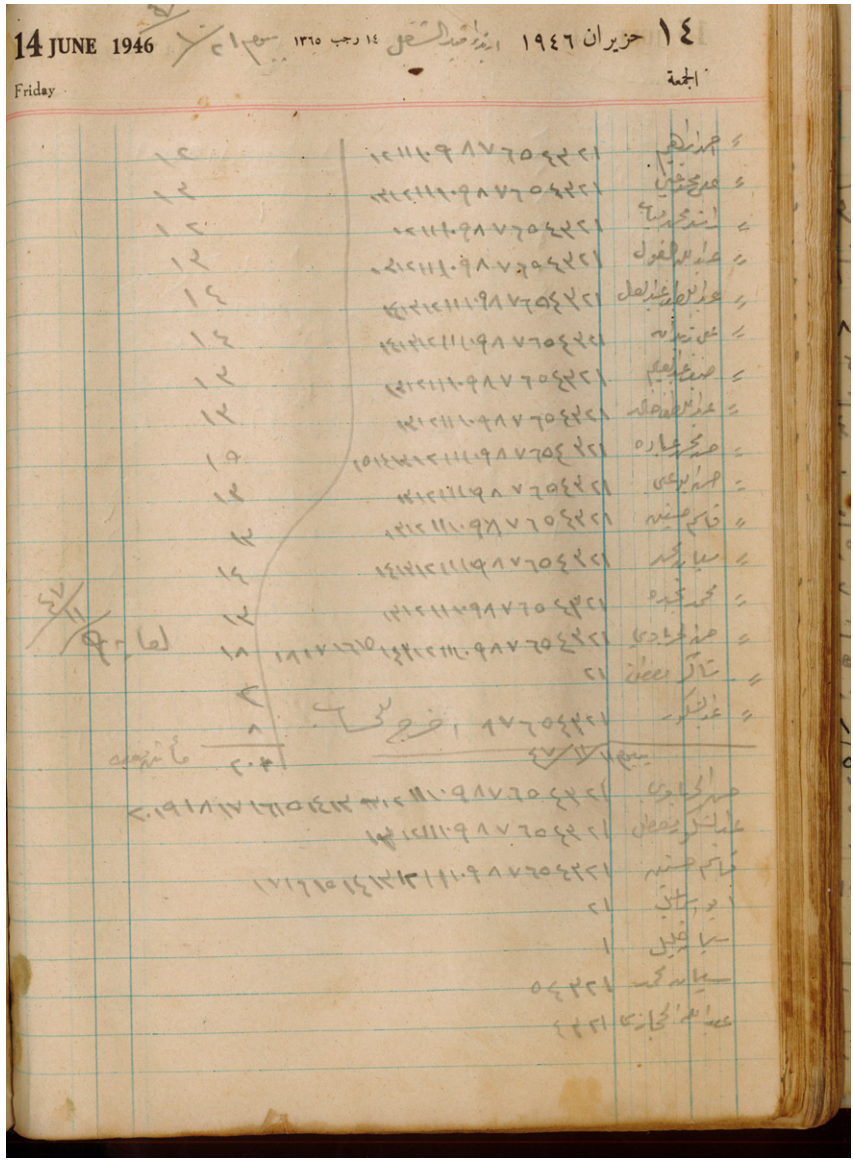


Figure 6. Work diary listing agricultural labourers in Bayyarat Hannun; Rashid Hannun business ledger (© Hannun family members and reproduced with permission).

'Seven Waves in the Sea': Ottoman Land Reform and the Accretion of Territorial Wealth

Historically, most land in the Ottoman Empire outside built-up areas and adjoining plantations (Arabic: *kurum*, *basatin*, *ghars*), belonged to the State. Since the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire employed an

indirect taxation system built around the concepts of tax farming (*iltizam*) and long-term fief leases of state-owned, *miri* lands (*malikane*) (Çizakça 1993). According to Brynen, 'Ottoman tax-farming rights represented a discretionary state reinforcement of the existing patrimonial powers of rural shaykhs' (Brynen 1995: 26). During the *tanzimat*, the Sublime Porte replaced tax farming with direct taxation. In a related move, the Ottoman Land Laws also permitted permanent, transferable possession (commonly presented as 'ownership' in the literature) of *miri* land (ibid).

Ottoman land reforms formally (if not always in practice) broke up the communal holding of *masha'* lands and made those lands a tradable commodity (cf. Grossman 1994: 28–39). Ottoman officials surveyed the countryside, recorded *miri* lands and offered them for sale to local cultivators or auctioned them to the highest bidder in the cases where cultivators could not afford the registration fees (Ottoman Turkish: *bedel misl*).[27] According to Farid al-Salim, '[L]and that had for centuries been communal village property became the legal property of people who had never lived on the land [. . .] This completely altered the social structure of Palestine. Local families such as Hajj Ibrahim, Hanun and Samara now assumed ownership of large areas of land registered in their names' (Salim 2011: 66).

In some instances, village-cluster sheikhs, like the Jayyusis of Bani Sa'b and the Burqawis of Wadi al-Sha'ir, received priority in registering land in their former *iqta*'s (fiefs), as the first Ottoman cadastral (*tapu*) registers dated 1286AH (=1869/70) show.[28] In other cases, cultivators and village elders preferred to let rural notables register the land in their stead, or sold them the land out of fear of conscription. Others lost their ownership because of unpaid debts, incurred by the 30–50% annual usury (*ribba*) (Özdeğer and Zeytinli 2019). These processes brought about a gradual change in control of lands from *multazims* and traditional village-cluster sheikhs to new rural notables (Al-Salim, 2008: 88–136).

According to Amin Abu Bakr, in most villages land accrued in the hands of a few households or clans, each holding a few hundred to a few thousand dunams. In other regions, like Jenin and Marj ibn 'Amir, land accumulated in the hands of the city-dwelling former village-cluster families 'Abd al-Hadis and Jarrars, which owned hundreds of thousands of dunams each. In and around Jerusalem, Jericho, al-Ramla and Hebron, overseers (*mutawalli*s) of waqf-domains like the Husayni and Nashshashibi families of Jerusalem aquired ownership over these vast religious endowments (Abu Bakr 1996: 515–572). Extensive lands in Beisan, Safed and the Jordan Valley were registered as Imperial domains

27 Shechter (1987); Abu Bakr (1996: 479–516); for the general case of the Ottoman Empire see Güven (2016).

28 Israel State Archives, files sl-1/5153 and sl-1/5156.

(Arabic: *jiftlik*, from Ottoman Turkish: *çiftlik*). In between those extremes, rural notable families like the Hannuns, the Hajj Ibrahims and others, held medium-sized possessions in the range of tens of thousands of dunums. These rural notables quickly moved to Subdistrict towns and developed into a powerful landowner class, which was firmly woven into the fabric of Ottoman provincial administration.[29]

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Hannuns were among the largest landowners in the Tulkarm Subdistrict, and a common saying attributed to them land unto 'seven waves in the sea' (*sab' mawjat fi al-bahr*). The Hannun's territorial possessions formed two separate blocks. The first block was comprised of lands in the hill country of Wadi al-Sha'ir in Saffarin, Dhinnaba, Shufa, Tulkarm, Kufr al-Labad and Kufr Sur.[30] The second block comprised of large tracks of land that the Ottoman authorities initially allocated to those hill villages in the coastal plain, namely around Bir Burin (mod. Be'erotayim) west of Tulkarm, Ghabat Shufa (mod. Tzur Moshe), and Ghabat Kufr Sur (Marom 2022a: 328). Rashid Hannun, second-generation leader of the family, told Israeli journalist Ahron Even-Chen that the Hannun 'family had 20,000 dunams of land, some in the southern part of Netanya, and some in the plain to the west of Tulkarm' (Even-Chen 1983: 189), and Rashid's statement is corroborated by surviving cadastral records.

Inspired by the orchard groves of their Jaffa in-laws, c. 1891 the Hannuns constructed Bayyarat Hannun (today, near modern Netanya Stadium), the 'first *bayyara* in the region' with its 'residential buildings, a pump house and a packing house, and 600 dunams of [. . .] citrus groves' (Even-Chen 1983: 189). In the late nineteenth century, citrus fruit cultivation became the most lucrative export crop grown in the plains, and the growing demand for it led to the intensification of land use and settlement. In time, Bayyarat Hannun developed into the main family retreat, and the largest citrus grove complex in the Sharon (Fig. 7). Israeli researchers like David Grossman, Yosi Vitriol, Avi Sasson, Eyal Ziv, Aviva Buchennino and Roy Marom, extensively studied the architecture and history of *Bayyarat* Hannun, making it the most documented and best-known example of citrus-grove houses in Palestine's coastal plain.[31] According to Rashid Hannun, affluent notables from Tulkarm and Nablus followed his family's example by planting citrus groves of their own in the coastal plain (Even-Chen 1983: 189). Among these notables were

29 Cf. TK *sijjil*1 [1913–1915]; Doumani (1995: 54–91); Al-Salim (2011: 65–80 and 112–114); (2015: 90–93_; Ghanaim, Abd al-Rahman and al-Ashqar (2009); Büssow (2011: 211–257).

30 Hagana Palestinian village reports, Hagana Archives, file 105/227; PRHP interviews.

31 Grossman (1990: 270–1); Vitriol (2001); Sasson and Ziv (2001); Buchennino (2008); Marom (2008: 39–42; 2022a: 328–344).

Figure 7. Bayyarat Hannun, 2010s (image by אבישי טייכר ז"ל, and reproduced under CC-BY-SA-3.0).

members of the Nabulsis, Sallahs and Shak'as of Nablus, the Jayyusis (from Tulkarm, Kur, Qalansuwa and Jaljuliya), Hajj Ibrahims (Tulkarm), Hamdallas ('Anabta), Shantis (Qalqiliya), Abu Hijlas (Deir Istiya) and others (cf. Kabha and Karlinsky 2021).

During the British Mandate period, the Hannuns and other rural notable families started to sell land to Jews, using some of the money they earned to develop their remaining possessions (Fig. 8).

Rural Notables, British Colonial Administration and Zionist Settlement

Rural notables played important roles in the national politics of the newly partitioned mandate territories carved from the defunct Ottoman Empire. In the Palestinian context, the Hannun family exemplifies these rural notables' ability to serve as intermediaries between the population and the government, and adopt existing power-structures like marriage alliances and networks of patronage to their advantage in national politics in Mandatory Palestine under British rule. The following sections present an outline of the political fortunes of the family, and its interactions with

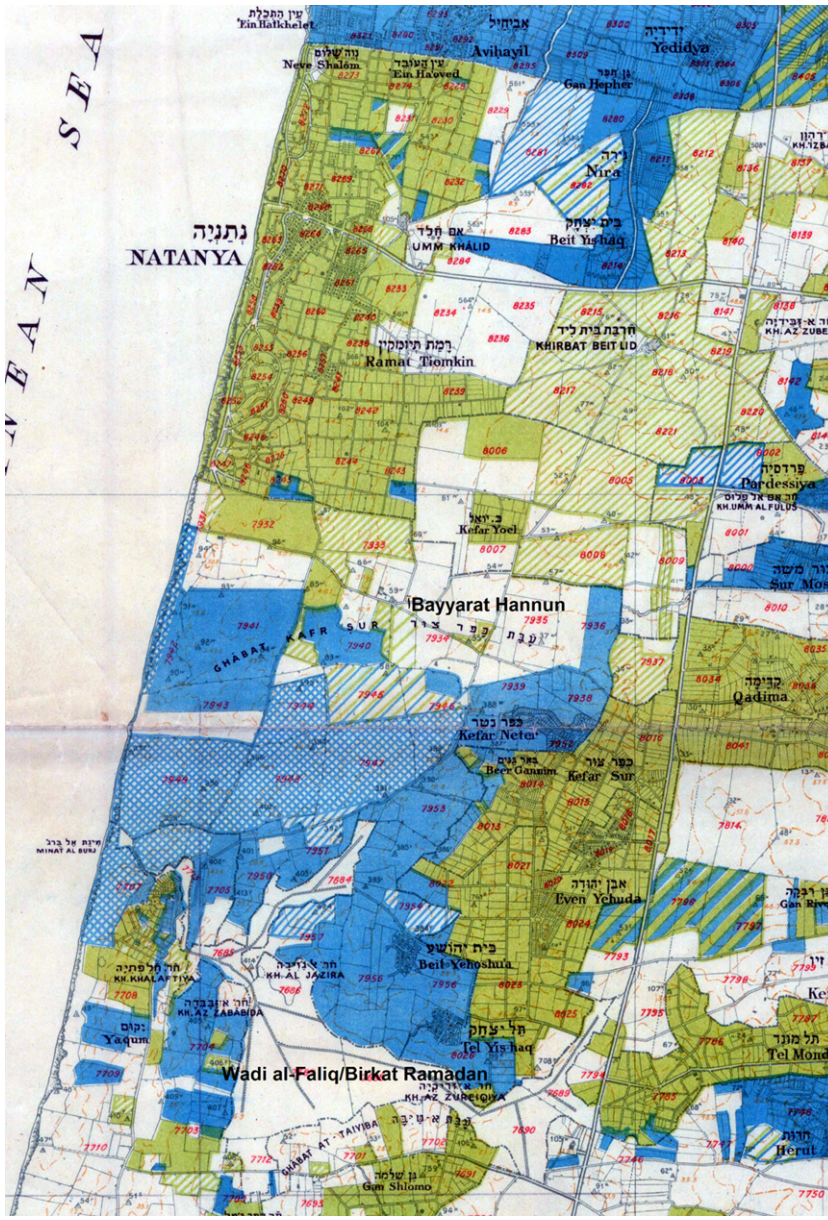


Figure 8. Land ownership around Bayyarat Hannun, west of Tulkarm, July 1947. Arab owned land is coloured white; privately owned Jewish land in green and JNF land in blue. Mixed colour areas represent mixed ownership (Z. Lifshits, 'Palestine: Coastal Plain, Zone of Sharon', 1947) (© Israel State Archives and published with permission).

the British colonial administration and Zionist settlement. Its political biography underpins Cohen's argument that

> Many regional leaders throughout Palestine [e]stablished ties with the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine, during the period of the British Mandate and the war of 1948. Their view of the world was entirely different from that of the official Arab national institutions. They saw no fundamental problem in selling land to Jews, they opposed the Arab rebellion in the 1930s, they rejected the leadership of Hajj Amin, and they did not take part in the attempt to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in 1948. (Cohen 2008: 3)

While the ideological differences and conflicting national-level political allegiances that Cohen discussed, played a key role in formulating this course of action, it was also affected by inter-personal and inter-clan disputes, divergent commercial interests, and — overall — the dynamic initiative of leaders within each family.

Local government and the political structure in Palestine underwent significant changes during the thirty years of British administration. However, the British occupation had no immediate effect on local power structures already in place. Local notables continued to prioritise land ownership and the production of agricultural goods, and they profited greatly from the increase in demand for land and agricultural products brought on by the spike in Jewish immigration, the exponential growth of the local Arab population, and the increased British military presence during the Second World War (Graham-Brown 1982: 141).

The Price of Land: Land Sales to Jews and their Repercussions

Starting in 1928, the British authorities undertook cadastral mapping and land settlement operations in Tulkarm Subdistrict, making land easier to trade, and facilitating Zionist-Jewish colonisation (Stein 1984; Gavish 2005: 151–2). The Hannun family is mentioned extensively in Palestinian and Jewish documents, in tandem with the establishment of the first Jewish settlements on their former possessions (Fig. 8). After the passing of the family's first-generation in the early 1930s, second-generation members built their own *bayyarat* using income derived in part from land sales to Jews (for an architectural survey of these *bayyarat*, see Vitriol 2001: 40–43, 50–65).

In 1932, private-capital entrepreneurs established the Jewish colonies (Heb. *Moshavot*) of Even Yehuda, Kfar Tsur/Be'er Ganim, and Tel Tsur on 10,000 dunams the Hannuns sold in Ghabat Kufr Sur.[32] In 1937, the JNF established Tsur Moshe on former Hannun land in Ghabat Shufa

32 Cohen (2008: 32); Gera (1988: 15–16); Al-Odeh (2007: 73, 137).

(1,068 dunam).[33] In 1938, at the height of the Arab Revolt, Muslih and Rashid Hannun sold off 4,500 dunams of their fathers' inheritance, situated between the Even Yehuda and the Wadi al-Faliq/Birkat Ramadan waqf estate. The JNF used this land to found the three 'Tower and Stockade' settlements of Beit Yehoshua', Kfar Netter and Tel Yitshaq.[34] In 1947 the Hannuns sold several hundred dunams to the JNF, facilitating the construction of a new Yemenite Jewish workers' quarter and the WIZO Hadassim youth village.[35] The Hannuns formed enduring friendships with Jewish land brokers involved in these transactions, like Yehoshua Hankin, 'Oved Ben-'Ami and Gad Machnes (Fig 4, 8).

The prevailing scholarly and popular consensus in Palestinian circles regards land sales to Jews variously as acts of treason, betrayal, or collaboration.[36] In contrast, Zionist discourse describes land sales as acts of mutual interest, economic and political cooperation, and personal self-serving.[37] Concurrently, Zionist writers derided land sellers as 'land pimps' (Hebrew: *sarsurey adamot*, vs. the more linguistically neutral but politically charged Arabic term '*samasira*' — 'land brokers', 'middlemen'). This article argues against both of the above nationalist discourses because they do not historicise land sales and explain them from a rational decision-making perspective. For example, with land prices increasing from less than 1.5 Palestine Pounds per dunam in the mid-1920s to over 100 Palestine Pounds by the mid-1940s, land sellers benefited tremendously, and selling land to the highest bidders made much economic sense (Marom 2022a: 352). The highest bidders were often, but not always, Jewish. By selling land, the Hannun could maintain themselves in exile (see below), or make necessary investments for enhancing agriculture output, such as digging wells, creating agricultural facilities, and installing new, more effective irrigation pipes (Marom 2022a:341–344).

Land sales to Jews were particularly widespread in the Tulkarm Subdistrict. Among the rural notables engaged in this practice were the Hajj Ibrahims, Beidas, Hamdallahs, Abu Hantashs and al-Shantis; the Shihada and al-Qirim clans from Sidna 'Ali and the Nashif, Mansur, 'Abd al-Raziq and al-Qasim 'Abd al-Qadir clans from al-Taiyiba, among others (See Fig. 1).[38]

Rural notables were the primary catalyst for Arab agricultural development and land ownership shifts in Tulkarm Subdistrict and the

33 CZA, files L18/753, L18/7153, L75/924, 927; Mish'al (2016: 135); Marom (2022a: 355).

34 CZA, files KKL5/10461, L75/925. 926 etc; Mish'al (2016: 133–135); Marom (2022a: 364–7).

35 CZA, file KKL5/16432.

36 In the context of Tulkarm Subdistrict, see Al-Odeh (2007); Mish'al (2016).

37 Cf. Avineri (1984); Stein (1984a,b); LeVine (1985); Khalidi (1987); Falah (2003).

38 Avineri (1984) and Marom (2022a: 351; 2022b: 16–18) based on Zionist records; Al-Odeh (2007) and Mish'al (2016) based on British cadastral registers, Palestinian press reports and Supreme Islamic Council files. Primary Zionist documentation is found in

Jaffa Subdistrict north of Nahr al-'Auja/the Yarkon, and perhaps in other parts of Palestine's coastal plain too. The revenues from land sales to Jews allowed rural notable families to flourish, and over time dominate, the Arab citrus fruit industry. Between 1918 and 1942, the number of Arab owned *Bayyarat* in the coastal region rose from 31 to over 250, in many cases next to Jewish holdings, citrus fruit groves and settlements (Marom 2022a: 327). By 1938, Jews owned 32.7% of all lands in the coastal region (summarised from Government of Palestine 1938), far above the national average of about 6%. The growing contact between Jews and Arabs increased both cooperation and conflict. Politically, land sales to Jews alienated these families from the nationalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist factions in Palestinian politics, and made these families more dependent on Britain and the Zionists for support, as discussed below.

The Palestinian Arab Revolt: Political Persecution and Realignment

In the 1930s, Palestinian politics were divided between the supporters of Mufti al-Hajj Amin al-Husseini and the nationalist Supreme Islamic Council, called the *Majlisiyyun*, and its opponents, the moderate 'opposition', called the *Mu'arada*, with which the Hannun family aligned itself (Porat 1978: 208). Rashid Hannun testified that his family was 'one of the supporters of the Peel Commission's partition plan [...] and conversations about the same plan took place between us and the Jews' (Even-Chen 1983: 191). The Tulkarm Subdistrict became a hub of nationalistic activity as the Arab national movement grew more intense in the 1930s against the backdrop of increasing Zionist colonistion. Popular opinion resented the Hannun family for its ties to the Yishuv and land sales to Zionist businessmen (Marom 2022a: 350–368).

The assassination of the youthful and dynamic Hasan 'Abd al-Rahim Hannun on the night of August 16, 1937 marked a turning point in the fortunes of the Hannun family. Public discourse attributed Hasan Hannun's murder to land sales to Jews (Cohen 2008: 123 no. 123). However, as a family member intimated to the Political Bureau of the Zionist Agency, Hasan Hannun actually opposed land sales.[39] The real reason behind the assassination was a betrothal dispute between the Hannun family and the Qasim 'Abd al-Qadir family of al-Taiyiba over marriage to Samiyya, daughter of Tulkarm's Mayor 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hajj Ibrahim.[40] The Hannun family retaliated by attempting to kill

CZA, series: A238 (Joshua Hankin), A402 (Zalman Lifshitz) KKL5 (JNF), L18 and L75 (Palestine Land Development Company).

39 A. H. K. 'Political Pieces of Information Concerning What is Happening among the Arabs', no. 21, 13 October 1937, S25/3539, CZA.

40 Court testimony of 'Abd al-Hamid 'Abd al-Hafidh Hannun, Israel State Archives, file p-36/176.

Figure 9. Rashid Hannun (© Hannun family members and published with permission).

Hasan Qasim ʻAbd al-Qadir, the rival suiter, and the relations between the families remained strained until a *ṣulha* in 1967.

In 1939, rebels assassinated Sorbonne graduate Dr. Rashad ʻAbd al-Rahim Hannun in Deir al-Ghusun as a warning to family members against land sales to Jews.[41] Following the murder, Rashad's brother Rashid (Fig. 9), a driving force behind land sales and contacts with Jews, fled to self-imposed exile. 'I left for Beirut', reminisced Rashid to an Israeli journalist-acquaintance, 'together with Hafidh al-Hamdallah from ʻAnabta [. . .] We found [there] many Palestinian refugees from among the opponents of [Mufti] al-Hajj Amin: Jamil Tuqan, ʻAbd al-Raʼuf Bitar, ʻUmar Bitar, Farid al-Rusheid' (Even Chen 1983: 191). These exiles were also joined in Beirut by many of the Hajj Ibrahims, including Tulkarm's newly-deposed (but pro-British) mayor ʻAbd

41 Even Chen 1983: 190–191; PRHP interview with a Hannun family member, 16 January 2020.

al-Rahman. Ironically, the assassinations aggravated the Hannuns' and al-Hajj Ibrahim's financial situation, increasing their dependence on Zionist monetary, political and security support. The assassinations bound them ever closer to the Jewish camp, out of fear for their safety, and of hatred towards their opponents, making them willing to sell land under disadvantageous terms.[42] What began as an ad-hoc move to secure the survival of the families against internal Arab purges and political persecution, turned into a strategic decision to align with the Zionist cause. 'I received the wire transfer, and I am exceedingly thankful for that', wrote Rashid Hannunin a letter to Hankin from Beirut on 2 March 1939,

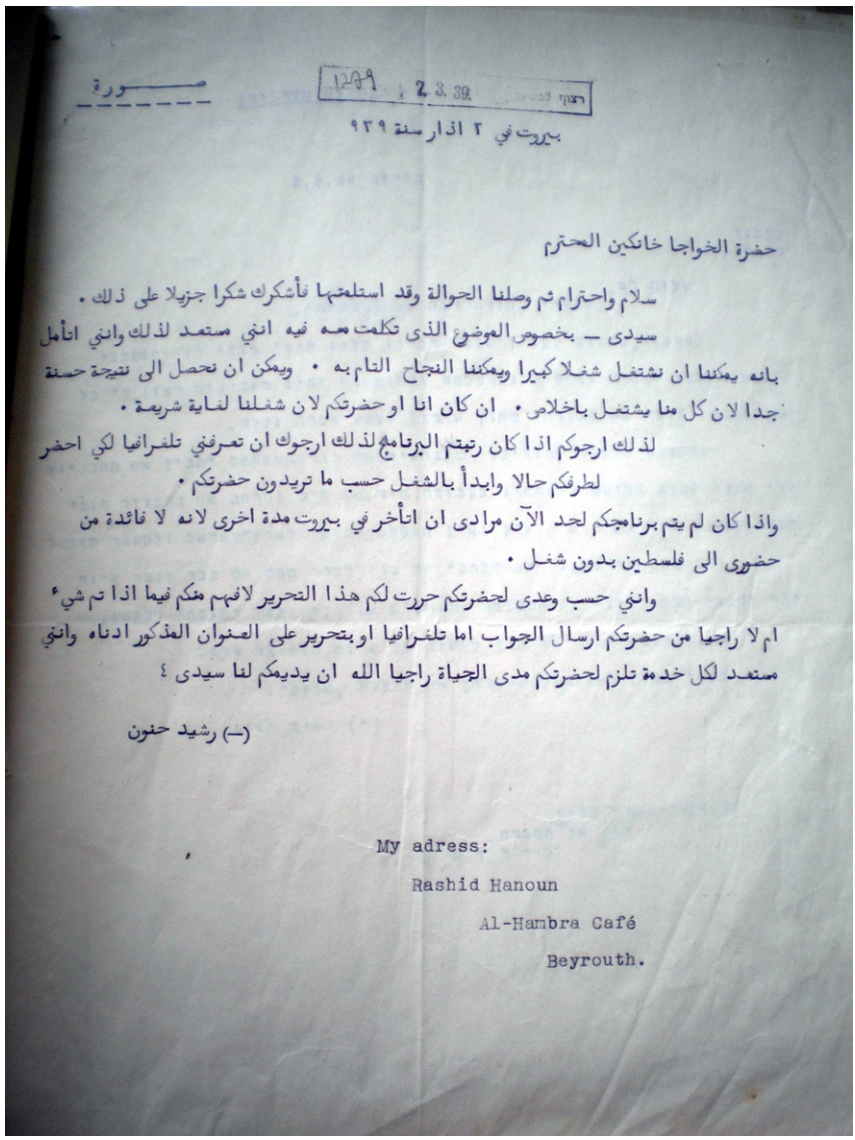
> I am willing and I hope that we will be able to do great work together with total success. We may [yet] achieve very fine results because everyone of us does his part with full sincerity [. . .] for a noble cause. [. . .] I am ready to undertake any service you might need for the duration of my life, asking God to preserve you, my lord (*sidi*)' (Fig. 10).[43]

The Second World War: The Fruits of Pro-British Advocacy

Following the crushing of the Arab revolt in March 1939, and exiling of the anti-British forces led by the Mufti (Haj Amin al-Husseini) the *Mu'aridun* gradually returned from exile. The 1940s were the high point of the *Mu'araḍa*. With their opponents out of the way, the *Mu'ariḍun* and their pro-Hashemite allies freely dominated the governmental bureaucracy and the Palestinian political scene. Pro-British, old-money Hisham al-Jayyusi was appointed as Tulkarm's Mayor with the Hannuns' support (in office, 1939–1951; replaced by Falah Hannun, 1951–1952). Members of former pro-Mufti clans, like the 'Abd al-Raziq and Qasim 'Abd al-Qadir clans joined established pro-British families like the Hannuns, Jayyusis, Beidas and al-Hajj Ibrahims.[44]

Fears about pro-Nazi sympathisers subverting British power in Palestine dominated British decision-making in the early months of World War II. After having just put down the Arab Revolt, British officials anticipated another wave of instability while their forces were fighting on distant fronts. The authorities urged rural notables to counter anti-British sentiments by publicly expressing support for the Mandatory Government. It rewarded pro-British behaviour with administrative appointments and low-interest loans. Rural notables like the Hannuns used their estates to hold pro-British rallies in the presence of representatives of HM Armed Forces and the colonial administration; engaging the populace with Allied

42 CZA, files L75/782, 7182.
43 CZA, file L18/753.
44 Hagana Archives, Series 105 [SHAY files]; PRHP interviews.



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بيروت في ٢ اذار سنة ٩٣٩

حضرة الخواجا خانكين المحترم

سلام واحترام ثم وصلنا الحوالة وقد استلمتها فأشكرك شكرا جزيلا على ذلك .
سيدى — بخصوص الموضوع الذى تكلمت معه فيه انني مستعد لذلك وانني اتأمل
بانه يمكننا ان نشتغل شغلا كبيرا ويمكننا النجاح التام به . ويمكن ان نحصل الى نتيجة حسنة
جدا لان كل منا يشتغل باخلاص . ان كان انا او حضرتكم لان شغلنا لغاية شريفة .
لذلك ارجوكم اذا كان رتبتم البرنامج لذلك ارجوك ان تعرفني تلغرافيا لكي احضر
لطرفكم حالا وابدأ بالشغل حسب ما تريدون حضرتكم .
واذا كان لم يتم برنامجكم لحد الآن مرادى ان اتأخر في بيروت مدة اخرى لانه لا فائدة من
حضوري الى فلسطين بدون شغل .
وانني حسب وعدى لحضرتكم حررت لكم هذا التحرير لافهم منكم فيما اذا تم شيء
ام لا راجيا من حضرتكم ارسال الجواب اما تلغرافيا او بتحرير على العنوان المذكور ادناه وانني
مستعد لكل خدمة تلزم لحضرتكم مدى الحياة راجيا الله ان يديمكم لنا سيدى ٤

(—) رشيد حنون

My adress:
Rashid Hanoun
Al-Hambra Café
Beyrouth.

Figure 10. Rashid Hannun's letter to Hankin, 1939 (CZA, L18/753) (© CZA and reproduced with permission).

propaganda and calls for Jewish and Arab amity in the countryside. One such rally, held at Bayyarat Hannun a month after the outbreak of the war, was attended by many villagers, demonstrating the family's influence in this region as a whole:

> In an Arab demonstration of loyalty to the government there was a demand for the establishment of peace between Arabs and Jews: Just before noon yesterday a big celebration was held in the mansion of the Hannun family of Tulkarm, south of Netanya, to show their feelings of loyalty to the British Government. Hundreds of Arab *fellahin* and Bedouins from the northern Sharon, Emek Hefer, up to the boundaries of Hadera participated in the event. [Also] attended Deputy Commissioner of Nablus district, Mr. Headly, police chief in Tulkarm, Mr. Butcher and officers from the army barracks in Netanya. [...] More than 100 Arabs riding horses passed through the streets of Netanya on their way to the celebration with singing and shooting guns'.[45]

How much these statements conveyed sincere personal conviction cannot be known. In any case, rural notables were not passive pawns in the hands of the British. The notables made sure to use public nature of the events to extort publicly-binding promises for British aid to themselves and their 'constituencies'. This formal exchange of loyalty-for-benefits stressed their own indispensability as intermediaries between the Government and the populace:

> Al-Tahir Hannun and Rashid [Saleh], the *mukhtar* of the village of Umm Khalid, near Netanya, gave speeches. The latter demanded, among other things, help for the *fellahin*, the opening of schools in the villages, the punishing of price gougers, and the establishment of peace between the two peoples in the country. District commissioner Headly expressed his satisfaction at the demonstration of loyalty and promised to pass over the demands that were submitted'.[46]

Al-Tahir Muhammad Hannun, son of Muslih's first-born son, was the Hannuns' most prominent political speaker. Originally holding reservations about British rule, after the suppression of the Revolt he become a pro-British advocate. The SHAY's (Hagana intelligence service) personal file about al-Tahir reports that on August 19, 1942 he convened 'a meeting of villagers in which he preached loyalty to Britain'.[47] The file further records, in detail, al-Tahir's political activity in Tulkarm, Qaqun, Shuweika, 'Anabta, Zeita, Kufr al-Labad and Khirbat Bayt Lid (see Fig. 4). Sarah Hannun confirms the general outlines of the Hagana's reports, recalling that her father used to express anti-Mufti stances and objections to renewed uprisings also in private conversations with former brothers-in-arms like 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni (al-Mudawwar 1997: 21).

The British authorities appointed al-Tahir to influential positions in and around Tulkarm: the government's representative in Tulkarm Subdistrict's Agricultural Committee (January 1943), member of Tulkarm's Chamber of Commerce (November 1943), member of the Governmental Savings Commission in Tulkarm (April 1944), member of the Rent Tribunal

45 'Be-hafgana 'aravit shel neemanut la-memshalah', *Davar*, 2 October 1939.
46 Ibid; cf. 'Sharon Arabs Declare for Allies', *Palestine Post*, 10 October 1939, p. 2.
47 Truman Institute Archive (Jerusalem), Series II, folder 1.

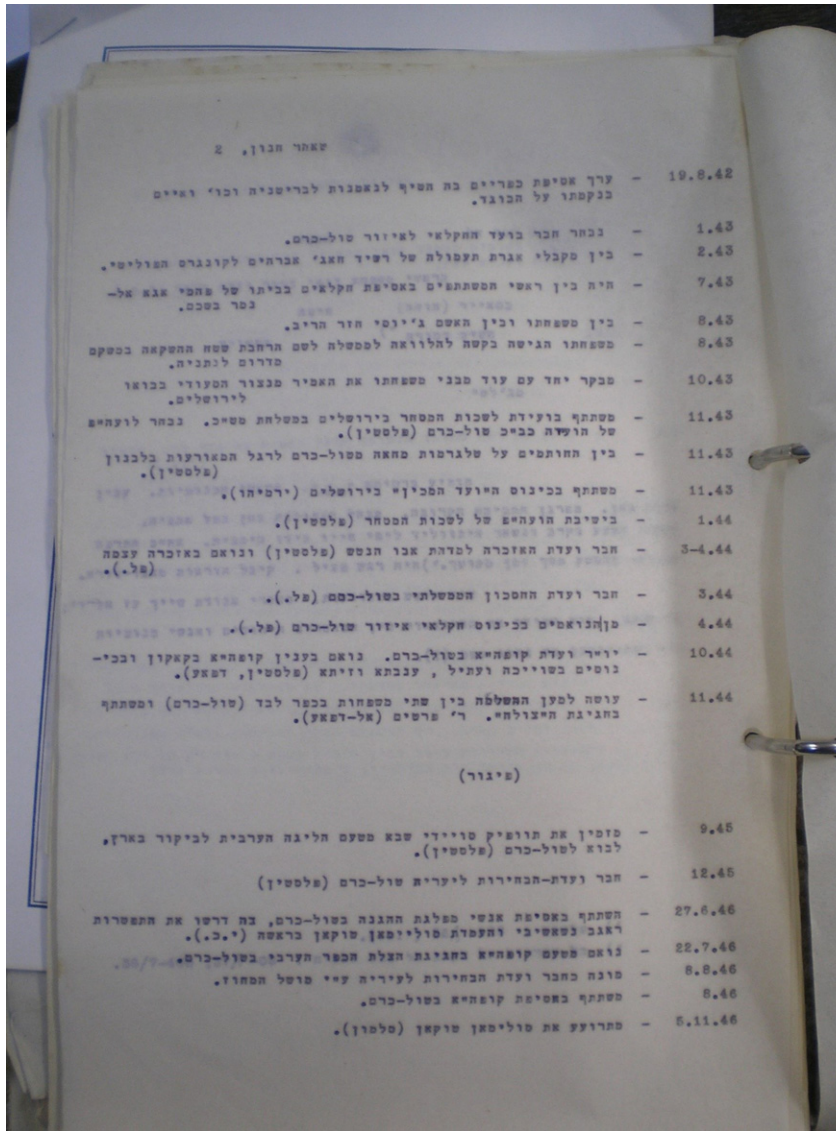

Figure 11. An excerpt from Tahir Hannun's SHAY personal file (Truman Archives, Shay personal files, Series II, folder 1) (© Truman Institute and reproduced with permission).

in Samaria District, and member in Tulkarm's Municipal Election Committee (December 1945) (see Fig. 11[48];Marom 2022a: 369, no. 1396). Hilmi Yusif Hannun, al-Tahir's first cousin and future Mayor of

48 Haganah Information Service SHAY Files, collected by Prof. Yaacov Shimoni. Prof. Yaacov Shimoni Archive, 1947–1948; Published with kind permission of the Archive

Tulkarm, served on Jaffa's Chamber of Commerce and was appointed to the executive board of the Palestine citrus fruit industry (Karlinsky and Kabha 2021: 25). The Beidas family, in-laws of the Hannuns, enjoyed similar jobs in Jaffa and their home village of al-Sheikh Muwannis (ibid, 55; Marom 2022b: 16–18, 22, 25). The incorporation of pro-British rural notables into provincial and municipal institutions mirrors, in many respects, the integration of the fathers and grandfathers of the same notables into the local Ottoman bureaucracy and administration in the post-*tanzimat* era.

During the Nakba, many Palestinian rural notables acted as intermediaries between the Jewish and Arab sides. In the first months of the war, before the British withdrawal, they successfully leveraged their connections with Zionist functionaries and trading partners in order to arrange local ceasefires and non-aggression pacts on an ad-hoc basis. Thus acted the Hannuns for Bayyarat Hannun and Netanya, Tulkarm and Kfar Yona; Beidas for Al-Sheikh Muwannis and Al-Jammasin, Tel Aviv and Petah Tikva; the Shantis in Biyar 'Adas and Kfar Malal, and the Qasims in the Wadi al-Faliq region.[49] The departure of the British and the escalation of hostilities precipitated the Zionist decision in April 1948 to cleanse the Jewish area of control of its remaining Arab inhabitants. Israeli authorities appropriated Bayyarat Hannun and the Hannuns' remaining coastal possessions.[50] Making best use of time-tested strategies, rural notable families like the Hannuns were quick to adapt to the new situation. Most, but not all notables with remaining possessions and rural power bases in the West Bank, including the Hannuns, Jayyusis, Hamdallas, and Shantis, supported the Hashemite annexation, benefitting from new opportunities as functionaries in the legislature, armed forces and civil service of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Mash'al 1971). Similar developments occurred in the Triangle Area with the 'Abd al-Raziq, Qasim and Mansur clans in al-Taiyiba, the Mansur and 'Abd al-Hayy clans of al-Tira, and other rural notable families in areas occupied by Israel during the war of 1948 (Cohen 2011).

Conclusion

This article discussed a family history related to the Palestinian rural notables' class, an analytical category comprised of rural sheikhs, religious scholars with material interests, village or clan headmen with similar life trajectories. 'Rural notables', as defined in this article, are broadly

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49 Hagana Archives, files 106/71/2, 105/72, 105/54a, 105/233; Morris (2004: 88, 127).

50 Hagana Archives, file 105/257; Morris (2004: 245).

distinguishable from other notables by their rustic origin, their medium land holdings and their basis in villages and towns, with the associated networks of patronage primarily in the countryside. Using the case study of the Hannun family and other families associated with it in the Tulkarm subdistrict, the article explored the rural notables' rise as a socio-economic class and political actors in the Late Ottoman and British Mandate periods. The article highlighted the crucial role that these rural notables played in the socio-economic development of modern Palestine.

The article opened with a historical overview of socio-economic and administrative transformations in Late Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine. It demonstrated how rural notables (like their urban colleagues) took advantage of changing legal administrative and political realities during and after the *tanzimat*, and of global economic shifts, to attain socio-economic and political ascendency in the countryside. Rural notables like the Hannuns exploited Ottoman land reforms to accrue territorial wealth and integrate into the expanding Ottoman state apparatus. This is evident in their participation in Ottoman municipal and provincial councils, their pioneering of cultivation of citrus groves in the coastal plain, and their participation in national politics in the post-Ottoman Mandatory Palestine, under colonial rule.

Next, the article presented a structuralist scheme to historicise the actions of rural notables in terms of clans, households, marriage alliances and networks of patronage. As in the case of urban notables, the ability of rural notables to adapt existing power-structures such as segmentary lineage systems, marriage alliances and networks of patronage to new circumstances proved instrumental to their success. These institutions, as well as the political strategies outlined above, continued to function with little change during the British Mandate period, and beyond. Indeed, many rural notables allied with the British administration, and served as advocates on its behalf.

Last, the article discussed the thorny issue of land sales to Jews. The article made the point that land sales should be historicised from a rational decision-making perspective. The resultant explanations provide a more compelling account of this phenomenon than overarching nationalistic *topoi*, like betrayal or collaboration, which figure prominently in existing literature. For example, the Hannuns' willingness to sell land stemmed from the economic incentives of spiking land prices. Internal Palestinian strife and political factionalism encouraged the Hannuns, and other rural notable families, to ally themselves with the Jews and British to the ultimate detriment of the Palestinian national project. The Nakba, however disastrous to Palestinian rural society in loss of homes, property, communities and lives, did not break the hold of rural notables on provincial and rural administration. Following their time-proven strategies,

rural notable aligned themselves with the new Hashemite and Israeli regimes, benefitting from new economic and political opportunities on both banks of the Jordan river for decades to come.

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